

Indiana Department of Environmental Management

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Text as prepared for: International Great Lakes St. Lawrence Mayor's Conference (Remarks)

Date presented: May 18, 2000

Location: Gary

(Text does not include verbatim comments)

I would like to thank the International Great Lakes St. Lawrence Mayor's Conference for your kind invitation to join you today, and I would like to extend a warm welcome to Indiana on behalf of Governor Frank O'Bannon. I would also like to extend my thanks to Mayor King for being such a cordial host for this conference. Lake Michigan is an important asset to us in Indiana and I am always ready, willing and able to talk about it and what IDEM is doing in Northwest Indiana. I recently heard Lake Michigan referred to as not only a *natural* resource, but also an *emotional* resource. This, of course, could be said for all of the Great Lakes.

I myself grew up in very close proximity to Lake Michigan in the Chicago area, where it was often my babysitter, my playground, and a regular destination point at all hours of the day and night in my teen and early adult years. And it was only after moving away from the vicinity of the lake that I realized what an incredible resource it is, and I continue to learn on a regular basis the many and varied facets of all of the great lakes.

The topic of this panel, Urban Revitalization and Environmental Restoration through Waterfront Redevelopment, is a subject that we take great interest in at the Indiana Department of Environmental Management. And this area where we are meeting for the next two days, NW Indiana and the southern tip of Lake Michigan, is an area that has many opportunities for both urban revitalization and environmental restoration, and waterfront revitalization is a wonderful way to achieve both of these objectives. I would like to talk a little about IDEM's perspective and role and in achieving these goals, as well as provide information on some of the accomplishments to date.

Forty-three miles of shoreline... That's all there is of Lake Michigan within Indiana. It is less than one-half of one percent of the total shoreline for the Great Lakes and only 2.6% of the total shoreline of Lake Michigan. But it may be the most diverse 43 miles of shoreline on all of the Great Lakes . . . if not shorelines anywhere.

Five integrated steel mills line the shores of Lake Michigan in Indiana . . . the largest concentration of steel making in the Western Hemisphere, producing 40% of the nation's steel. It is also home for the refining of millions of gallons of petroleum every year. The Indiana Harbor Ship Canal is the second busiest shipping port on Lake Michigan. And the area is home to many other industries

At first glance, the area looks to be entirely industrial. However, upon closer examination the jewels come shining through, and the dedication of preservationists becomes obvious, as well as the miracle of oversight of some pockets that have been overlooked for development,

In the shadow of those great steel mills is the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, a National Park Service property. The natural features of the National Lakeshore are remarkable: Dunes rise 180 feet above the lake with beaches, bogs, marshes, swamps, and prairie remnants providing a contrast. The 14 miles of the National Lakeshore include seven public swimming beaches.

Also in the shadow of the great steel mills, in those dunes, lives the Karner Blue butterfly, an endangered species that has learned to share its space with humans. And it shares its home with many other endangered or threatened species of insects, plants and animals.

The population along the lake is also as diverse as the landscape. Young and old, rich and poor, urban and rural, as well as culturally and ethnically diverse people, all call Northwest Indiana home.

The economic, geographic and demographic diversity of the lakeshore in Indiana is undeniable, as is the importance of the lake to residents in Northwest Indiana. But with such great diversity comes great challenges, and particularly environmental challenges. And these challenges are at the center of what we face as we begin this new millennium. These are challenges that all of us B private sector and public sector, local, state and federal government, rich and poor B must face.

Today we are meeting in one of the 43 designated Areas of Concern in the Great Lakes basin. These areas were identified because one or more beneficial uses of the affected waterway was found to be impaired. Impaired beneficial uses include such problems as beach closings, contaminated sediment and degraded natural habitat. In the case of the Grand Calumet River/Indiana Harbor Ship Canal, all 14 beneficial uses are impaired . . .this is the only Area of Concern in the Great Lakes basin that is so affected.

A brief inventory of our environmental challenges will help put this area in perspective for you. The area includes 18 natural ecological community types, more than 700 species of plants, and more than 200 species of birds. Unfortunately, important natural processes that led to the diverse ecological richness of the area have been altered by human development.

Habitat fragmentation, fire suppression, hydrologic changes, the introduction of exotic plants and wildlife species, shoreline alteration and environmental contamination all have contributed to the impairment of the ecology. Natural habitat areas now range in quality from minimally disturbed to severely degraded. Some of these areas include the Miller Woods and Dunes area, the Clarke and Pine East preserve, the DuPont Dune and Swale area, the Gary Airport Sedge Meadow area and Roxanna Marsh.

This area . . . the Indiana Lake Michigan Area of Concern . . . also includes several Superfund sites that exist adjacent to natural areas of significant biological diversity. Water in the Grand Calumet River/ Indiana Harbor Ship Canal, and nearshore Lake Michigan fail to meet designated water quality standards. Contaminated sediments, contaminated groundwater, and air deposition

all contribute to this problem. There are consumption advisories for fish that are able to live in these polluted waters.

We have severe environmental challenges in Northwest Indiana, but much of the damage was done before we knew what price we would have to pay. The water in the Grand Calumet River is cleaner today than it has been in decades.

The sediments, however, are seriously contaminated from discharges of years past and, in some instances, from business and industry long gone.

Fortunately, there is a flip side to this picture. The human resources of the area are boundless. No one group or party stands alone in trying to find a solution. Save the Dunes Council and the Grand Cal Task Force are at the table with U.S. Steel, Ispat-Inland Steel and Northern Indiana Public Service Company. The industries and environmental groups are joined by educators, local residents, state, federal and local government. The diversity of those working to find solutions is as great as the ecological diversity of the region.

I have also come to learn that the energy and cooperation of these people are unbounded. Nowhere else in Indiana is there an effort like the one here in Northwest Indiana. John Fekete of Ispat-Inland Steel, Dr. Mark Reshkin, a retired educator, Tom Anderson from Save the Dunes, Lee Botts from Lake Michigan Federation, Bowdin Quinn from Grand Cal Task Force, Zemmer Morris and Doreen Carey of Gary, Paul Labus of The Nature Conservancy and Lorraine Stasek from Hammond, all come together on a regular basis to work together on the common goal of improving and restoring the regional environment.

There are others who also are an important part of the effort and who have been at it for a long time. They make up the nucleus of what we call the CARE Committee . . . an advisory group for the Remedial Action Plan here in this Area of Concern. Their efforts were recognized in 1998 when the Grand Calumet Area of Concern was recognized by the IJC as a Beacon of Light in the Great Lakes; making it one of the outstanding efforts in the Great Lakes basin.

So here we are, serious environmental challenges and dedicated, hard working people ready to meet those challenges. It has been an important combination. And we have several efforts underway to deal with the challenges. Not the least of which is the Remedial Action Plan for this Area of Concern.

Through the auspices of the Remedial Action Plan or in support of its goals, several projects are underway in Northwest Indiana. One of the first to be completed was the Sediment Cleanup Restoration Alternatives Project or SCRAP. This report, nearly eight inches thick, was developed by IDEM and the Corps of Engineers, and reviewed by EPA, to be a basin-wide planning document for the eventuality of sediment dredging projects in both the Grand Cal and the ship canal.

IDEM and the Army Corps of Engineers have provided funding and technical planning assistance totaling almost \$2 million and the EPA committed \$208,000 to develop a Geographical Information System in support of the project.

Another important project, in which IDEM participates but is directed by the Grand Cal Task Force, is the Grand Calumet River Corridor Visioning Project. The goal of this project is to plan for the revitalization and restoration of the Grand Calumet River. It is currently working to promote an effective balance of community and economic development, commercial and industrial uses, recreational opportunities, historical and cultural preservation, nature conservation, water quality improvement and environmental education. The project has an extensive and effective community outreach component to help make those neighborhoods along the river corridor aware of what a valuable resource the river and canal can become. The project is working toward a vision concept plan with an agenda for implementation.

Some important habitat restoration efforts are also taking place by The Nature Conservancy, Save the Dunes, the National Lakeshore, DNR, the Shirley Heinze Fund and others.

Another area of crucial habitat currently under restoration is the Clark & Pine Nature Preserve. This tract of 47 acres contains the highest number of rare plants per acre of any area in Indiana. An additional 253 acres were acquired by the state through a consent decree and are being restored under the stewardship of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources and the Indiana Natural Resource Trustees.

A lot of planning initiatives and restoration projects are underway here in Northwest Indiana. But other efforts are also in place which will have long-lasting positive benefits to the nearshore Lake Michigan.

Lake Michigan has wonderful swimming beaches, a favorite spot for hundreds of thousands of visitors every summer. Back in the early parts of the last century the South Shore railroad line promoted using the train to leave hot, humid Chicago and visit the beaches of sunny Indiana.

Today, however, we face a problem of several times a year closing the beaches to swimming due to high E. coli counts. Recognizing that waterfront redevelopment will be impaired if this problem is not addressed, as well as the fact that the IJC has identified beach closures as an impairment to beneficial uses of bodies of water, the Inter-agency Technical Task Force on E. Coli was formed.

I would also like to note that Indiana has adopted the federal standard of 235 colonies per milliliter as the trigger threshold for full body contact. Indiana is one of the few Acoastal@ states that has adopted a standard and routinely tests the beaches for E. coli. If the count is too high, the beach is closed for swimming until the count comes down within acceptable limits.

The task force was formed to bring together technical experts to deal with the problem of beach closures. The task force has already had some impact by standardizing testing throughout the three counties in Northwest Indiana. It has also established a monitoring network of government, business and industry to widen the amount of E. coli testing taking place routinely throughout the three counties. The data being collected is being collated, analyzed and posted on the Internet. The Task Force has also assisted member organizations in obtaining grants for additional study of beach closures. One study currently underway involves testing new methods for taking E. coli

samples that can cut the turn around time for a test from 24 hours to six hours; allowing the beaches to be tested for each day's swimming.

Another important part of revitalization through waterfront restoration is the redevelopment of brownfields. IDEM received a \$150,000 EPA grant to fund brownfield assessments in East Chicago, Hammond and Gary.

Through working with the Northwest Indiana Brownfields Redevelopment Project, made up of representatives from East Chicago, Hammond and Gary, sites have been assessed in each of the cooperating communities

We are also hard at work in Northwest Indiana on air quality issues. The Partners for Clean Air, an alliance of primarily businesses and community groups, have been working hard to educate citizens of these three counties about ozone issues and what they can do whenever the conditions are such that ozone exceedances are likely. A local bus company received a grant to allow local area residents to ride free on ozone action days and leave their cars at home. Local churches are participating in the public outreach for ozone issues. Indiana has been an active participant in the Lake Michigan Air Directors Consortium, called LADCO, a group working on ozone issues in the Milwaukee-Chicago-Northwest Indiana area. This group and local and state agencies also work closely with OTAG, the Ozone Transport Assessment Group. OTAG is made up of 37 states east of the Rockies and deals primarily with studying the movement of ozone across state borders.

These are just a sampling of what we are doing in Northwest Indiana. These projects each take us a step closer to what we all want Northwest Indiana to be . . .

a place where the wonders of nature can and do live side-by-side with the wonders of man. We believe there is room for both . . . a healthy ecology and a healthy economy. And we are moving in great strides to achieve that in Northwest Indiana.

In closing, let me tell you a story about what almost happened here . . . an "almost" that would have changed this region forever. A reporter was interviewing President Kennedy in the White House when he noticed some paperwork on the President's desk. Reading upside down, as some reporters can do, he read that the Indiana shoreline of Lake Michigan was going to be made available for industrial development. He finished his interview and left the White House. The reporter was alarmed about the prospect of losing the Indiana dunes and so he called the only person he thought could help . . . Senator Paul Douglas of Illinois. Senator Douglas immediately called the White House and got an appointment with President Kennedy. They took a stroll on the White House grounds and a compromise was reached. Not all of the shoreline in Indiana would be lost to industrial use . . . some of the ecology would be saved.

If you get a chance while you're here, see some more of the shoreline in Indiana . . . enjoy its natural beauty. Take time to visit the Douglas Nature Center. And, as you do, contemplate what we here in Indiana have learned... the near shore of Lake Michigan is certainly an area with serious environmental challenges. But it is also an area we see as a place with abundant opportunities. It is an area where, yes, money is being spent, plans are being made, projects

developed, but, most importantly, it is a place where a lot of people, from diverse and varied backgrounds and a multitude of interests are standing shoulder-to-shoulder to make Northwest Indiana a better place to live. And that is the greatest advantage of all.